



PRESS RELEASE

World Governments Move Towards Global Treaty on Mercury

[Bangkok - 23 October 2009] Today, world governments took the first significant steps towards a Legally Binding Treaty to control mercury pollution at a United Nations Environmental Program meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. Their recommendations now provide countries with a basis to head into the International Negotiating Committee (INC) meetings starting in Stockholm, June 2010.

“We are happy that governments agreed on rules of procedures, which allow NGO participation, and a time table to adopt a treaty by 2013,” said Elena Lymberidi-Settimo of the European Environmental Bureau and the Zero Mercury Working Group.

During the meeting, information on supply and trade, products and artisanal scale gold mining were provided. Countries and regions expressed their opinion on how discussions should unfold in the INC meetings, and governments updated participants on activities controlling mercury in their own countries.

“We look forward to engaging in focused discussions in areas such as supply, trade and storage of surplus mercury where substantial progress can be made,” said Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group and director of the US-based Mercury Policy Project. “Discussion on arrangements for technical and financial assistance, and mechanisms addressing compliance should also be addressed early on.”

Richard Gutierrez of the Philippine NGO Ban Toxics noted, “We are optimistic that the global community is now well on its way towards establishing a treaty to control mercury pollution and effectively safeguarding the fish we eat from this poison.”

Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that makes its way up the food chain into humans. It is a global pollutant that travels long distances. Its most toxic form – methylmercury - accumulates in large predatory fish and is taken up in our bodies through eating fish, with the worst impacts on babies *in utero* and small children.

The **Zero Mercury Working Group**, www.zeromercury.org, is an international coalition of over 75 public-interest non-governmental organisations worldwide formed in 2005 by the European Environmental Bureau and the Mercury Policy Project/Ban Mercury Working Group. The group’s aim is to reach “Zero emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, towards eliminating mercury in the environment at EU level and globally.”

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